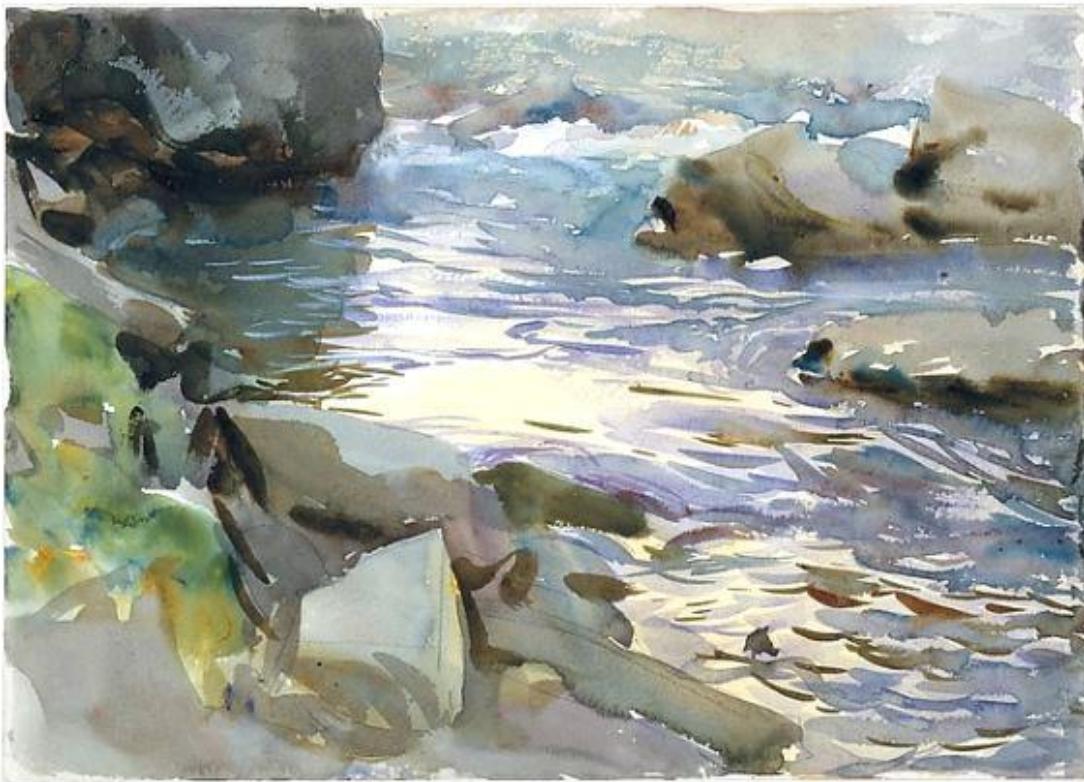


15 American Poems



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UPSTREAM

by Carl Sandburg

from *American Poetry, 1922: A Miscellany*

The strong men keep coming on.
They go down shot, hanged, sick, broken.
They live on, fighting, singing, lucky as plungers.

The strong men ... they keep coming on.
The strong mothers pulling them from a dark sea, a great prairie, a
long mountain.

Call hallelujah, call amen, call deep thanks.
The strong men keep coming on.

RAIN

By Alfred Kreymborg

from *American Poetry, 1922: A Miscellany*

It's all very well for you
suddenly to withdraw
and say, I'll come again,
but what of the bruises you've left,
what of the green and the blue,
the yellow, purple and violet?--
don't you be telling us,
I'm innocent of these,
irresponsible of happenings--
didn't we see you steal next to her,
tenderly,
with your silver mist about you
to hide your blandishment?--
now, what of what followed, eh?--
we saw you hover close,
caress her,
open her pore-cups,
make a cross of her,
quickly penetrate her--
she opening to you,
engulfing you,
every limb of her,
bud of her, pore of her?--
don't call these things, kisses--
mouth-kisses, hand-kisses,
elbow, knee and toe,
and let it go at that--
disappear and promise
what you'll never perform:
we've known you to slink away
until drought-time,
drooping-time,
withering-time:
we've caught you crawling off
into winter-time,
try to cover what you've done
with a long white scarf--
your own frozen tears
(likely phrase!)
and lilt your,
I'll be back in spring!
Next spring, and you know it,
she won't be the same,

though she may look the same
to you from where you are,
and invite you down again!

XV

by John Gould Fletcher
from: *Irradiations; Sand and Spray*

O seeded grass, you army of little men
Crawling up the long slope with quivering, quick blades of steel:
You who storm millions of graves, tiny green tentacles of Earth,
Interlace yourselves tightly over my heart,
And do not let me go:
For I would lie here forever and watch with one eye
The pilgrimaging ants in your dull, savage jungles,
The while with the other I see the stiff lines of the slope
Break in mid-air, a wave surprisingly arrested,
And above them, wavering, dancing, bodiless, colourless, unreal,
The long thin lazy fingers of the heat.

WILD ASTERS

by Sara Teasdale
from *Love Songs*

In the spring I asked the daisies
If his words were true,
And the clever, clear-eyed daisies
Always knew.

Now the fields are brown and barren,
Bitter autumn blows,
And of all the stupid asters
Not one knows.

THE LITTLE GARDEN

by Amy Lowell

from: *A Dome of Many-Coloured Glass*

A little garden on a bleak hillside
Where deep the heavy, dazzling mountain snow
Lies far into the spring. The sun's pale glow
Is scarcely able to melt patches wide
About the single rose bush. All denied
Of nature's tender ministries. But no, --
For wonder-working faith has made it blow
With flowers many hued and starry-eyed.
Here sleeps the sun long, idle summer hours;
Here butterflies and bees fare far to rove
Amid the crumpled leaves of poppy flowers;
Here four o'clocks, to the passionate night above
Fling whiffs of perfume, like pale incense showers.
A little garden, loved with a great love!

EVENING STAR

by Edgar Allan Poe

from: *The Works of E. A. Poe, Vol. 5*

'TWAS noontide of summer,
And midtime of night,
And stars, in their orbits,
Shone pale, through the light
Of the brighter, cold moon.
'Mid planets her slaves,
Herself in the Heavens,
Her beam on the waves.

I gazed awhile
On her cold smile;
Too cold-too cold for me--
There passed, as a shroud,
A fleecy cloud,
And I turned away to thee,

Proud Evening Star,
In thy glory afar
And dearer thy beam shall be;
For joy to my heart
Is the proud part

Thou bearest in Heaven at night.,
And more I admire
Thy distant fire,
Than that colder, lowly light.

IMPRESSIONS

By Alice Dunbar-Nelson
From: *Violets and Other Tales*

THOUGHT.

A swift, successive chain of things,
That flash, kaleidoscope-like, now in, now out,
Now straight, now eddying in wild rings,
No order, neither law, compels their moves,
But endless, constant, always swiftly roves.

HOPE.

Wild seas of tossing, writhing waves,
A wreck half-sinking in the tortuous gloom;
One man clings desperately, while Boreas raves,
And helps to blot the rays of moon and star,
Then comes a sudden flash of light, which gleams on shores afar.

LOVE.

A bed of roses, pleasing to the eye,
Flowers of heaven, passionate and pure,
Upon this bed the youthful often lie,
And pressing hard upon its sweet delight,
The cruel thorns pierce soul and heart, and cause a woeful blight.

DEATH.

A traveller who has always heard
That on this journey he some day must go,
Yet shudders now, when at the fatal word
He starts upon the lonesome, dreary way.
The past, a page of joy and woe,--the future, none can say.

FAITH.

Blind clinging to a stern, stone cross,
Or it may be of frailer make;
Eyes shut, ears closed to earth's drear dross,
Immovable, serene, the world away
From thoughts--the mind uncaring for another day.

THE FLOWER OF MENDING

(To Eudora, after I had had certain dire adventures.)

by Vachel Lindsay

from: *The Chinese Nightingale and Other Poems*

When Dragon-fly would fix his wings,
When Snail would patch his house,
When moths have marred the overcoat
Of tender Mister Mouse,

The pretty creatures go with haste
To the sunlit blue-grass hills
Where the Flower of Mending yields the wax
And webs to help their ills.

The hour the coats are waxed and webbed
They fall into a dream,
And when they wake the ragged robes
Are joined without a seam.

My heart is but a dragon-fly,
My heart is but a mouse,
My heart is but a haughty snail
In a little stony house.

Your hand was honey-comb to heal,
Your voice a web to bind.
You were a Mending Flower to me
To cure my heart and mind.

LA FIGLIA CHE PIANGE

By T. S. Eliot

From *Prufrock and Other Observations*

Stand on the highest pavement of the stair--
Lean on a garden urn--
Weave, weave the sunlight in your hair--
Clasp your flowers to you with a pained surprise--
Fling them to the ground and turn
With a fugitive resentment in your eyes:
But weave, weave the sunlight in your hair.

So I would have had him leave,
So I would have had her stand and grieve,
So he would have left
As the soul leaves the body torn and bruised
As the mind deserts the body it has used.
I should find
Some way incomparably light and deft,
Some way we both should understand,
Simple and faithless as a smile and shake of the hand.

She turned away, but with the autumn weather
Compelled my imagination many days,
Many days and many hours:
Her hair over her arms and her arms full of flowers.
And I wonder how they should have been together!
I should have lost a gesture and a pose.
Sometimes these cogitations still amaze
The troubled midnight and the noon's repose.

MARSH HYMNS

by Sidney Lanier
from *Poems*

Between Dawn and Sunrise.

Were silver pink, and had a soul,
Which soul were shy, which shyness might
A visible influence be, and roll
Through heaven and earth -- 'twere thou, O light!

O rhapsody of the wraith of red,
O blush but yet in prophecy,

O sun-hint that hath overspread
Sky, marsh, my soul, and yonder sail.

Thou and I.

So one in heart and thought, I trow,
That thou might'st press the strings and I might draw the bow
And both would meet in music sweet,
Thou and I, I trow.

MY ROSE.

by Emily Dickinson
from *Poems: Three Series, Complete*

Pigmy seraphs gone astray,
Velvet people from Vevay,
Belles from some lost summer day,
Bees' exclusive coterie.
Paris could not lay the fold
Belted down with emerald;
Venice could not show a cheek
Of a tint so lustrous meek.
Never such an ambuscade
As of brier and leaf displayed
For my little damask maid.
I had rather wear her grace
Than an earl's distinguished face;
I had rather dwell like her
Than be Duke of Exeter
Royalty enough for me
To subdue the bumble-bee!

THE WORLD BELOW THE BRINE

by Walt Whitman

from: *Leaves of Grass*

The world below the brine,
Forests at the bottom of the sea, the branches and leaves,
Sea-lettuce, vast lichens, strange flowers and seeds, the thick
 tangle openings, and pink turf,
Different colors, pale gray and green, purple, white, and gold, the
 play of light through the water,
Dumb swimmers there among the rocks, coral, gluten, grass, rushes,
 and the aliment of the swimmers,
Sluggish existences grazing there suspended, or slowly crawling
 close to the bottom,
The sperm-whale at the surface blowing air and spray, or disporting
 with his flukes,
The leaden-eyed shark, the walrus, the turtle, the hairy
 sea-leopard, and the sting-ray,
Passions there, wars, pursuits, tribes, sight in those ocean-depths,
 breathing that thick-breathing air, as so many do,
The change thence to the sight here, and to the subtle air breathed
 by beings like us who walk this sphere,
The change onward from ours to that of beings who walk other spheres.

WALTER SIMMONS

By Edgar Lee Masters

From *Spoon River Anthology*

MY parents thought that I would be
As great as Edison or greater:
For as a boy I made balloons
And wondrous kites and toys with clocks
And little engines with tracks to run on
And telephones of cans and thread.
I played the cornet and painted pictures,
Modeled in clay and took the part
Of the villain in the "Octoroon."
But then at twenty--one I married
And had to live, and so, to live
I learned the trade of making watches
And kept the jewelry store on the square,
Thinking, thinking, thinking, thinking,--
Not of business, but of the engine
I studied the calculus to build.
And all Spoon River watched and waited

To see it work, but it never worked.
And a few kind souls believed my genius
Was somehow hampered by the store.
It wasn't true.
The truth was this:
I did not have the brains.

MEN I'M NOT MARRIED TO

By Dorothy Parker
From: *Men I'm Not Married To*

No matter where my route may lie,
 No matter whither I repair,
In brief--no matter how or why
 Or when I go, the boys are there.
On lane and byways, street and square,
 On alley, path and avenue,
They seem to spring up everywhere--
 The men I am not married to.

I watch them as they pass me by;
 At each in wonderment I stare,
And, "but for heaven's grace," I cry,
 "There goes the guy whose name I'd wear!"
They represent no species rare,
 They walk and talk as others do;
They're fair to see--but only fair--
 The men I am not married to.

I'm sure that to a mother's eye
 Is each potentially a bear.
But though at home they rank ace-high,
 No change of heart could I declare.
Yet worry silvers not their hair;
 They deck them not with sprigs of rue.
It's curious how they do not care--
 The men I am not married to.

THE GARDEN

By H. D.

From *Some Imagist Poets*

I

You are clear,
O rose, cut in rock,
hard as the descent of hail.

I could scrape the colour
from the petal,
like spilt dye from a rock.

If I could break you
I could break a tree.

If I could stir
I could break a tree,
I could break you.

II

O wind,
rend open the heat,
cut apart the heat,
rend it sideways.

Fruit can not drop
through this thick air:
fruit can not fall into heat
that presses up and blunts
the points of pears
and rounds the grapes.

Cut the heat,
plough through it,
turning it on either side
of your path.

